

# News, Players and News of the Stage

## New York Indifferent to Some Plays Road Welcomes

'Mister Antonio,' Only Mildly Interesting Here, Has Triumphal Progress in Hinterland—Comedy With Music and Without.

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

WHEN Booth Tarkington wrote for Otis Skinner a play of American life called "Mister Antonio" it was acted at the Lyceum Theatre and voted altogether too scant and placid for the use of the metropolis. Still the drama ran until the actor's admirers had seen him. And when its New York career was finally at an end it had proved considerably more profitable than the sophisticated and sceptical first nighters had supposed possible. Beyond the memory of a rather vivid picture of a barroom in the first act there were only pallid reflections of small town life on a Sunday afternoon to cheer the first nighters homeward.

"Mister Antonio" in the fulness of time departed to make its way through the sticks. This way proved a triumphal progress. The hinterland took to the drama about the Italian organ grinder as a duck to water. Never did that vague and far reaching tract known as "the road" enjoy itself so much as it did while witnessing "Mister Antonio," and all hands collected the simoleons which flowed in so rapidly that it was difficult to catch them as they came. It was said in the chancellery of the manager who presented "Mister Antonio" that the author's royalties amounted to more than \$60,000.

Probably Mr. Tarkington argued that if a mild and gentle little three act play could earn so much one much milder and gentler could earn proportionately more. "The Wren" suggests some such process of composition. Certainly nothing could be designed to calm the nerves and succeed so completely. The tranquil fable of the little girl who watched over papa and then fell in love with the young artist from Canada almost to lose him when the siren appeared is posed against a novel and picturesque background. Then there is nothing agitating in the life of the Maine coast boarding house, although its progress is never altogether without interest.

Probably "The Wren," whatever its New York fate may be, will interest the public as much as "Mister Antonio" did once it strikes the Tarkington belt. It is a large and comprehensive area. It devours with equal voracity "Alice Adams" and "The Country Cousin." Such a wholehearted taste ought to find a pocket for "The Wren." Little does it matter that the author has sketched his characters in so lightly. The play at the Gaiety has all the characteristics of a water color. The effect of an aquatint does not depend altogether upon the stretch of ocean seen through the open doors of the captain's boarding house. It pervades the composition.

Miss Helen Hayes, who plays so comfortably the title role, if an actress may be said to impersonate a bird, has one advantage over many of her colleagues. She has notable variety in her method. She can establish a sense of change as few of her more mature rivals conspicuously before the public. If some of the sainted sisterhood of the stars would study this detail of her acting they could be improved even in their eminence. The heroine of "The Wren" is not a part that affords many different emotional aspects, but Miss Hayes imparts to every one its individual tone.

### Acting of Different Roles.

McKay Morris in the expert dramatic version of "Main Street" which the Shuberts have produced so well at the National Theatre is quite indisputably the most skilled of the players. He is the village doctor, the natural, human, simple and heroic citizen of Gopher Prairie, which the supercilious heroine with her Greenwich Village veneer pretends to despise. He is an altogether comprehensible being. His ego is not in the least complicated. Mr. Morris impersonates this fellow in natural and impressive fashion. His acting is a delight in its faithful revelation of the man.

But his task is much easier than Miss Tell's. She is the lofty soul who will set her Western home right in art, letters and taste. What she wants and why she wants it, to what her aspirations lead and what her ultimate ambitions really are—these matters are never settled definitely in the mind of the spectator. Possibly psychanalysis might successfully dig these her complaints, keeping in mind the fact that with maternity she grew more normal. She is a vague character on the stage and Miss Tell or any other actress who was called upon to make plausible her varying moods must find the task difficult. Mr. Morris's achievement is none the less praiseworthy because he has to impersonate an entirely understandable being. If Miss Tell does not picture to the mind, however, the heroine of "Main Street" it is not so much the result of her own failure as the utter vagueness of the woman.

### Good Fortune of Librettist.

Fancy the good fortune of a librettist who says that he will have no music at all for his operetta but that the finest composers shall create, be he living or be dead. Then out of the ether there comes to him such a string of lovely melodies as the world never heard from any other musician.

There is nothing experimental about them. They have stood the test of years. They have been acclaimed by every critic as faultless masterpieces and there has been the further tribute of passionate affection from every hearer. Wherever two or three have gathered together in the name of some harmony these melodies have been celebrated. They have engaged the talents of the most distinguished virtuosi that ever faced the public from a concert platform. The world has proclaimed them the purest jewels of song. They are great enough to possess the quality of eternal freshness.

Franz Schubert was the unique composer who came, as it were, from the heavens to illustrate the text of Reichert and Willner's charming "Blossom Time," which is one of the town's autumn delights at the Ambassador Theatre. Think of these lucky writers of a libretto who were able to acquire, as it were, a score which is altogether incomparable in its beauty.

Writers of operetta books on the backs of the Wien have been able before this to enjoy the cooperation of distinguished composers. They have

been numerous all the way down the line from the Strausses to the Straus, with Von Suppe, Millocker, Lehár, Jacobi, Kalman and numerous others. But never before was the help of Franz Schubert to be obtained until these lucky men came along and wrote "The House of the Three Girls," which dealt with a more or less apocryphal love affair in the life of the poet of tones.

Now the work is here to be enjoyed to the last note by every lover of melody. No admirer of the musical comedy need be scared away by a suggestion that the "Unfinished Symphony" occurs in the score. Nor need any of the other songs that have been so judiciously selected create any terror of the high class atmosphere "Blossom Time" is a continuous stream of melody which will appeal to the same force to the man who loves "Cheri" as to him who is anxiously awaiting the first concert of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

J. J. Shubert has neglected no opportunity to have this music delivered as well as it could be in a production of comic opera. The men in particular sing well, and they are altogether capable of producing sufficient illusion to keep the story plausible. William Danforth never seems to the writer so well placed as in Gilbert and Sullivan, but he makes amusing enough fun out of the weaknesses of the court jeweller. Howard Marsh has increased remarkably in point and authority since he began a year ago in the Greenwich Village Follies and his fine voice has lost none of its freshness. The singing voices of the women are equal to their task. So "Blossom Time," with Dorothy Donnelly's vivacious dialogue, is a feast of famous melody.

### "The Love Letter."

Nothing more artistic in the performance of comic opera than "The Love Letter" has come to the New York stage in years. Of course there are few such singers in operetta as John Charles Thomas, who has been especially well provided for by Victor Jacobi and has frequent opportunities to reveal the beauty of his voice. In both the Italian and the Irish numbers which the composer has written for him, Mr. Thomas is enabled to show his powers at their best. Then there could be nothing more delightful than the sudden melodious burst of entrancing waltz rhythm which comes into the score with the reminiscence of "The Marriage Market."

The staccato dance numbers dedicated to the Astors are just as piquant as these two really incomparable comic dancers require. They are more now than mere dancers. They have developed a sense of comedy which is no less effective because it is expressed in such novel terms.

Exquisite in her pose and with the grace of a diuette of the boulevards in her senses of comedy, Miss Marjorie Gatenes seems like a new apparition in "The Love Letter." She seems to have found herself for the first time. Her skill and finish suggest that Miss Gatenes might be an irresistible actress of comedy. Mr. Dillingham might give her a trial in that line some day without the aid of music.

So long as he lived and produced here the musical comedies that were imported from London nobody ever treated them with the same delicacy that Augustin Daly imparted to his productions. Under his skilled treatment they were altogether different from the efforts of other managers in the same direction. Mr. Dillingham seems his inevitable successor in this monopoly of the ability to present musical plays daintily, tastefully and above all politely.

The charming "The Love Letter" is a fine example of the gift which might well be studied by other managers. One need not be a devotee of the musical shows produced under the same aegis for any chorus girl smeared with cosmetics until she looks like an Alaskan totem pole and wriggling on and off the stage with the aplomb of a graduate of Billy Watson's Beef Trust. That is distinctly not the Dillingham manner.

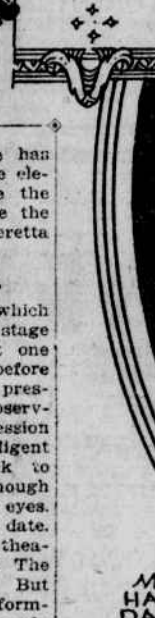
Of course, the generally refined atmosphere of "The Love Letter" is immeasurably increased by the taste of the dressing. Then Joseph Urban has not always during recent years turned out such imaginative and

LIONEL BARRYMORE as Miss IRENE FENWICK in "The Claw." Broadhurst

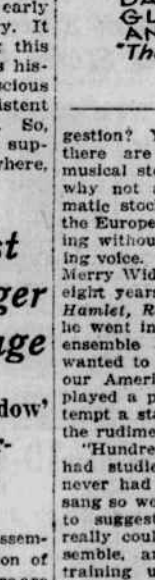


Miss JULIA SANDERSON in "The Angerine" at the Casino

LEILA FROST and WILLIAM ROSELLE in "A Bachelor's Night" at Park Theatre



Miss HAZEL DAWN and GLENN ANDERS in "The Demi-Virgin" at Times Square



Miss MARY RYAN in "ONLY 38" at the Cort.

Miss BARBARA DEAN in "SALLY" at New Amsterdam Theatre



Miss CHARLOTTE SPRAGUE in "BOMBO" at 59th St. Theatre



SIR HARRY LAUDER at The Lexington

### "Mecca" to Be Given in Brooklyn Theatre

"Mecca," with the Century Theatre cast and production, will be the attraction at the Majestic Theatre this week. The big company includes Miss Gladys Hammer, Lionel Braham, Miss Ida Muller, Miss Hannah Toback, Orville Caldwell and many others, with Sergei Peridoff and Miss Martha Lorber, principal dancers in the Fokine ballet of one hundred.

Sam H. Harris offers Miss Frances Larrimore in "Nice People," a comedy of American life by Rachel Crothers, at the Montauk Theatre, for the second and last week.

Miss Doris Keane will appear at Teller's Shubert in "Romance," her long standing success, by Edward Sheldon, together with most of the cast who assisted her in her return to New York at the Playhouse last season.

A condensed version of "The Kiss Burglar," musical comedy, with Denny Malley and Harry Clarke, will head the bill at the Shubert-Crescent. Others will be Bayonne Whipple and Walter Huston, Ernestine Myers and company, Miss Dolly Cannolly and Clarke and Verdi.

"I Accuse," French photoplay by Abel Gance, will be the feature at the Strand.

"The Cabaret Girls" will be the burlesque attraction at the Star.

Carl Randall, with Misses Berta Denn and Dorothy Clark in a dancing number, will be the headline at the Orpheum. Others will be Miss Ruth Roy, Ben Welch and company, W. C. Fields and Miss Elizabeth Kennedy.

NEW BURLESQUE AT COLUMBIA.

A burlesque organization never before seen at the Columbia and called "The Sugar Plums" will appear at that house this week and present a new two act travesty called "Let 'Em Rip," written by Addison Burkhardt, with music by Jerome Sanford. The production is the effort of Dan Dody, whose past activities have been confined to the staging of musical numbers. Joe Freed and Artie Leeming are the principal fun makers of the company, and they have the support of Misses Dolly Rayfield, Rita Rose, May Newman and Folly Follie.

"WELCOME STRANGER" AGAIN.

"Welcome Stranger," by Aaron Hoffman, with the popular comedian George Sidney in the principal role, will be this week's offering at the Shubert-Riviera Theatre. The comedy will be given with practically the same cast and production as was seen in it during its run downtown at the Sam H. Harris Theatre.

OPERA IN BROOKLYN.

Mme. Maria Casellotti will make her debut and sing the role of Gilda at the performance of "Rigoletto" by the Brooklyn Opera Company to be given on Tuesday night, October 25, at the Academy of Music.

### Turning Back the Clock.

Among the numerous plays which were piled on the metropolitan stage recently in such numbers that one or two faded from view even before the public was aware of their presence is a specimen well worth observing for its richness in the possession of the qualities which intelligent actors and managers now seek to avoid. The singular direct is enough to make the spectators rub their eyes. It makes them uneasy as to the date. Is this then really a New York theatre in the year of grace 1921? The programme affirms this fact. But everything else about the performance so graphically suggests the early 90s that its evidence is necessary. It would be worth while attending this representation for the sake of its historic interest and its unconscious humor were it not for the insistent note of pathos that will intrude. So, perhaps, it is, after all, better to suppress all definite details as to where, when and whom.

### Good Acting First Requisite for Singer Says H. W. Savage

Producer of 'The Merry Widow' Tells Why So Many Foreigners Are Engaged.

Henry W. Savage, who when assembling a cast for his new production of "The Merry Widow" asked: "Where are our American singers?" and forthwith faced 1,723 aspirants for a place in his company, declares that there is nothing at all the matter with their voices. "We have the finest voices in the world here," says the impresario, who has produced grand and light opera and musical comedy. "But a good singing voice is only one of the four requisites for success on the modern musical stage."

"The aspirant-to-day for grand opera, light opera or musical comedy," according to Mr. Savage, "must be able to act, look, sing and dance. Yes, acting comes first. And that is exactly what the majority of our American singers cannot do. The reason so many foreign singers are engaged for American operatic productions is because our native singers lack stage technique. They have not had proper training in stage routine. The audience simply sees such an actor as stiff, awkward and unnatural. He is only at ease when he sings. His hands are in the way, his feet are ungainly. Yet the foreign singer of twice his girth and not half his good looks is easier to watch and admire. If only our American singers would study acting we could not only display all American casts in our own country but we would also export our singers to Europe—where most of the opera companies would welcome American sparkle and individuality."

"The American singer is not entirely to be blamed for his shortcomings," admitted Mr. Savage. "In European cities, especially in the smaller cities where the theatre is subsidized, the young singer is practically forced to master stage routine, for he has to play straight drama, comedy and farce as well as opera. No matter how well he sings he must depend on acting to keep him in a permanent engagement—for there are more dramatic than musical offerings in repertoire. In this country we have no similar training school for our young singers."

"But surely there is a 'next best' sub-

### Low Fields Heads Bill at the Winter Garden

Low Fields in a condensed version of "Snapshots of 1921" will head the vaudeville bill at the Winter Garden this week. With him in this musical tabloid will be Miss Lulu McConnell, who will also appear with Grant Simpson in "At Home." Others will be Miss Lillian Fitzgerald, Yvette, Fred Allen, Ed La Vine and Armstrong and James. Jimmy Hussey will top the programme at the Forty-fourth Street with some of the scenes of the recent revue, "The Mink World," doing his prize fight scene. Others will be Joe Jackson, the Rath Brothers, the Ziegler Sisters, Burt Earle and his Eight California Girls, Dave Vine and Luella Temple, Rome and Cullen, Buddy Doyle and Johnny Jones.

"One, Two, Three," a musical farce,

and Charlie Chaplin in "The Idle Class" will be the chief offerings at Loew's State.

### Lauder Starting His American Tour

To-morrow night at the Lexington Theatre Sir Harry Lauder will start his American tour. He will sing several new songs, including "I Know a Lassie Out in O-H-I-O," and "Over the Hill to Artillery," as well as reviving several old favorites. He will appear in costumes as usual, with appropriate scenery and will be surrounded on the programme by the customary company of entertainers. He will give four matinee performances starting Wednesday.

### 'The Claw,' 'A Bachelor's Night' and 'The Demi-Virgin' Come In

MONDAY.

BROADHURST THEATRE—Arthur Hopkins will present Lionel Barrymore in "The Claw," a drama by Henri Bernstein. In the supporting cast are Miss Irene Fenwick, Miss Doris Rankin, Charles Kennedy, E. J. Ballantine, Marie Dwyer and George Majeroni.

PARK THEATRE—John Cort will present Wilson Collaen's latest farce, "A Bachelor's Night." It deals with life in a bachelor's apartment that is run on the "open house" style. The cast includes Miss Isabel Irving, Herbert Yost, Leila Frost, William Roselle, Miss Lilyan Tashman and Miss Amy Ongley.

TUESDAY.

TIMES SQUARE THEATRE—A. H. Woods will produce a new farce in three acts by Avery Hopwood, entitled "The Demi-Virgin," described as a farcical romance with satiric intent. The scenes are laid in southern California. The cast includes Miss Hazel Dawn, Charles Riggles, Kenneth Douglas, Miss Constance Farber and Glenn Anders.

## Al Jolson Tells In Fleeting Moment of His New Play

Says He Took Production Because Author Was Pestering Him to Death.

This is an interview with Al Jolson just as it was shot at the interviewer. Jolson enters the lobby of the glittering new theatre that bears his name while the crowds are rolling in and incidentally giving the cold shoulder to the very comedian whom they are about to applaud uproariously in "Bombo." For Jolson, strange as it may appear, isn't wearing his black face, though he is displaying his usual openwork smile, good humored and yet with a touch of ironical detachment whenever he spills a new one.

He is fletcherizing a stubby cigar and wearing a golfing cap and a large yellow overcoat that might readily be called 'Fido. Though the audience streaming by doesn't know him his personal cronies line in the lobby, seemingly six deep. From all sides comes the hail, "Hello, Al!" until he is kept flitting about like a popular bootlegger. But he is finally nabbed by an unforgiving press agent and chained to the hand of THE NEW YORK HERALD representative—for a fleeting moment.

"How d'you do," says Jolson. "Pleased to meet you. Excuse me a moment." And off he skips to greet another individual who has "promoter" written all over him, while the air comes thick in Jolson's vicinity with such remarks as "couldn't sign anything" and "couldn't take stock in that." The interviewer's suspicions are confirmed when Jolson sticks back and announces blandly that he has just successfully run the gamut of another oil stock peddler.

### Only Time He Was Stung.

"Got a lot of those," he remarked, "can't count 'em all. Every one seems to figure I'm naturally interested in bum stock, bum shows and bum houses. Only time I was ever stung was when I'd been playing the races in the office of a big theatrical man, and cleaned up a few bets—say, seven or eight thousand dollars. A man sells me stock in an oil well for \$2,500, and the next week it went biogeo! Of course, it was really a saving, because I didn't have to pay the income tax on it. Pardon me a moment."

He answers a wall of distress from a friend at the box office window who didn't find the tickets promised to him, then that matter up and goes something else with another acquaintance, and then bustles over to a corner of the lobby to let a group have a broadside of jokes. "That's the way he is," says the press agent, still undisturbed, "always on the fly. In his dressing room he'll give two minutes to one caller, and then if a 'boothack' drops in with a mouth open Jolson will let him have an hour."

"For the first time in my life I'm a happy man," declares Jolson, sliding up and apparently resuming the conversation just where he left off. "No, it isn't the show—but the least of my joys once it's gone over. But all my life I've been living in furnished rooms or hotels—see?—and now I have a home. Up the street I have a nice apartment of my own, with a new maid to cook while I sit there—you know—and say, 'Hi! Bring on the dinner! But it's dangerous—to-night it felt so good I nearly fell asleep over my cigar. But I won't have a valet—I can't hit that stuff yet—my shoes will have the same old shine. The cook's name is Beatrice, but I think of calling her—'I'll be right back.'"

He slips from the interviewer's clutches and careers about the lobby some more. When he spins back in the foyer he is tricked into standing still for a moment by being asked about the play he is going to produce, which stretches his interest over as much as three minutes.

### Felt Sorry for the Author.

"I took the play because I felt sorry for the author, Ethelred Stale—and he was pestering me to death. So I thought I'd better produce it anyhow. And then, you see, in these things you first make the advance payment and then it costs you \$50,000 more to hold on to that first \$500. Now it has me crazy. Strange, I thought somehow it could be produced without money. First the audience comes to see and then they'll need several thousand for the wages to begin building the sets, and I tell him why not try giving them his notes? You see, I'd heard about these notes before. I have a couple in my pocket now."

"Then the scenic artist comes and says they'll need \$10,000, and I learn some more. He says they have sold trees made of wood, and I tell him, 'Paint them in—wood, and I tell him, 'The scenery's the thing. Shake, shake and I are together on that.' Then he says, 'We'll need eight stage hands in each wing and four more up in the flies,' and I says to him, 'I'm not producing a play for the sake of a lot of stage hands. I'm getting actors to do the work in it.'"

"You should see the cast—picked 'em out of stock companies myself. Tried to get Lenore Ulric for the leading role, but as I couldn't engage her I went to Buffalo and got 'em cheap. No, I'm not going to retire and produce—they make me cut that out of my speech now, but I've got a new joke for the show. Saw a drunk staggering down the street to-day and said to myself, 'What a vulgar display of wealth!'"

Jolson is making the fidgety motions of one about to flee this maddening world, so the interviewer lays a detaining hand on him and asks for the inside tip on what makes a successful comedian.

"Well," he says, "a little gag goes a long way. I haven't got it—often I get as stage struck as though the audience hated me. The opening night I took a walk up to Ninety-sixth street before the show and felt fine, and then when I got to my dressing room I had to have a good cry like a woman for heaven knows what."



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